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ABSTRACT

Based on a unique, longitudinal study of 100 divorcing families with school-age children, this book argues that popular images of divorce, including those shared by many psychologists, are too individualistic, too negative, and too universalizing about an experience that can be very different for men and women, parents and children, and different kinds of families. The book illuminates both the positive and negative effects of divorce on family members and family relationships during the first year after parental separation, offering a nuanced, empirically grounded examination of divorce as a family system event. The chapters are divided into four parts, covering the psychological experience of parental divorce; how individual family members adapt to parental separation; family dyads, adjustment, and change; and parental divorce as a family transformation. Illustrated by clearly presented data, detailed case studies, excerpts from interview transcripts, and observations of mother-child interactions, the chapters cover topics including: (1) specific factors that help or hinder adjustment for individual family members; (2) links between mothers' and children's adjustment and the quality of their relationships; (3) the impact of parental conflict and other stressors on children's well-being; (4) strategies used by divorced couples to contain conflict and coparent successfully; (5) the development of the custodial household as a new "system"; and (6) folk beliefs about divorce, and how they stand up to the facts. (HTH)

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